

## Church leader backs gay bishops

Written by The West Australian | Kim Macdonald  
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The split within the Anglican Church widened yesterday after the Archbishop of Perth Roger Herft declared support for homosexual bishops, claiming the Church and society had been rejecting gay and lesbian people for too long.

His candid comments echoed those of the leader of the world's Anglicans, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, who told the Times in London he had "no problem" with gay bishops.

Neither archbishop would endorse a candidate in an active gay relationship because there was a traditional celibacy "standard" for bishops.

The Right Rev. Harry Entwistle, who heads the 120-strong Traditional Anglican Communion in WA, said the Church's increasingly liberal views were one reason the dissident group he belonged to was breaking away to join the Catholic Church.

Mr Entwistle said the TAC only supported gay people if they were celibate, claiming homosexual sex was as immoral as "promiscuous adultery".

The TAC, with half a million members globally, expects to enter into full communion with Rome within a year.

Archbishop Herft said the gay and lesbian community had long faced judgment and there was a danger of homophobia.

"We have treated them by and large with suspicion, with rejection and we have excluded them from most things, and that isn't a healthy way for the Church to react," he said.

Archbishop Herft said he had to endorse the official Church view that only married couples

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should have sexual relations, but debate was needed amid a social revolution.

"I believe that we cannot ignore the questions being placed before us of people living holy lives of integrity, whether they are gay persons, lesbians or people in heterosexual (de facto) relationships," he said.

"Here are people whose lives are actually flourishing, (but) in some sense it jars against the Church's expectation of them, and that's the issue that I'm frustrated about because I think we haven't really been attentive to this massive revolution that has taken place."

Archbishop Herft said the Church should support the things that helped people flourish.

"So the question I think we have to ask ourselves. . . is how does a gay or lesbian person flourish if sexuality is very much a part of our human nature and the art of flourishing," he said.

He would not support gay marriage, but backed gay civil unions which would recognise legal rights like those granted to heterosexual partners.

About 10 months ago Archbishop Herft condemned the election of the second openly homosexual Anglican bishop in the US.

He had feared that the timing was not right in 2009.

Source: [The West Australian](#)